

# Memories in Performance: Commemoration and the Commemorative Experience in Jia Zhangke's *24 City*

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## Abstract:

In this article, I examine how *24 City* (2008) commemorates the factory and its workers through combining memory, the act of remembering, and its recitation, thus creating 'memories in performance' that construct an emotional history of this group. I use a Chinese word for commemoration, *jinian* (纪念) to structure this paper into the three components of memory (记), the act of remembering (记得), and mindful thought and recitation (念), all of which combine to commemorate the factory and the sacrifice of the worker class. I examine how both the real and fictional interviews in the film create the same emotional meaning through producing emotions that are 'real' regardless whether their source is real or fake, thus emphasizing that memory is not only about history and 'fact,' but also, more importantly, about the emotion it conveys. I consider how the memories are affective in that they present a past that is being remembered, performed and retold in the present, thus enabling both the real and fictional memories to become 'real' in their narration. I analyze how the lived and fictive memories and their remembrance produces a filmic space to commemorate the factory and the workers' sacrifices, and argue that this produces an intimacy with the viewer, in that it presents the workers' history as personal stories being remembered, recalled, and felt again, not sterile facts being repeated. I conclude by considering how this film is indicative of a larger commemorative turn, and how it offers not only a 'sight' of commemoration (as an example of Chinese visual culture), but also a site of commemoration – a commemorative object as well as a commemorative experience.

**Keywords:** Commemoration; Mourning; Politics; Affect; Phenomenology.

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In the opening sequence of Jia Zhangke's *24 City* (二十四城记, *Ershisi Cheng Ji*, 2008), the film records employees arriving at a factory, working at their stations, and then congregating in the factory's auditorium to commemorate the transfer of the factory's land to a property developer. The remainder of the film is composed of interviews with people who have either lived or worked in the factory complex, and explores their emotional engagement with the factory and its former community of workers. Similar to the opening ceremony that ritualizes the closing of the factory and commemorates the factory's passing into memory, *24 City* connects history, memory, and emotion, to affectively commemorate the factory and its workers, as the factory is demolished during the course of the film and its workers are disbanded.

In this article, I examine how the film commemorates the factory and its workers through combining memory, the act of remembering, and its recitation, thus creating 'memories in performance' that construct an emotional and collective history of this group. To commemorate is to make memories. In English, the word 'commemoration' stems from the Latin *commemorat*, 'brought to remembrance,' and from the verb *commemorare*, (*com* = altogether, *memorare* = relate). Comparatively, in Chinese *jinian* (纪念) means both 'to commemorate' and 'commemoration,' and combines *ji* (纪, to record, a cognate for 记, remember, record) with *nian* (念), meaning to study, to read aloud, to miss, to think of, and remembrance (Schuessler 2007: 98). I use the word *jinian* to structure this paper into the three components of memory (记), the act of remembering (记得), and mindful thought and recitation (念), all of which combine to commemorate the factory and the sacrifice of the worker class. I begin by examining the memories in the interviews and how they create a collective memory of this rapidly disappearing group through using both real and fictional interviews (which are performed by professional actors), and consider how this difference in the genesis of the memory (fact versus fiction) in turn creates meaning, by turning to theories on memory, emotion, narrative, and media experiences. I argue that the memories in the film – both real and scripted – create the same emotional meaning, because they produce emotions that are 'real' regardless whether their source is real or fake, thus emphasizing that memory is not only about history and 'fact,' but also, more importantly, about the emotion it conveys. In the second part, I consider how the memories are affective due to the medium of film, since it records the act of remembering and its recitation, and resurrects emotions from the past in the present. This presents a past that is being remembered, performed and retold in the present – the 'present' of the film's recording as well as the 'present' of its viewing, as it is re-created through this narration, thus

enabling both the real and fictional memories to become 'real' in their narration. Remembering is a verb that unfolds over time, and this experience allows the viewer to 'feel' reality through the memories' narrations, creating 'memories in performance' that commemorate the factory and the workers by constructing an emotional history of this group. In the third section, I analyze how the lived and fictive memories and their remembrance produce a space to commemorate the factory and the workers' sacrifices, and argue that this produces an intimacy with the viewer, in that it presents the workers' history as personal stories being remembered, recalled, and felt again, not sterile facts being repeated. I conclude by considering how this film is indicative of a larger commemorative turn, and how it offers not only a 'sight' of commemoration (as an example of Chinese visual culture), but also a site of commemoration – a commemorative object as well as a commemorative experience.

### 记- Memory

*24 City* is composed of the memories of people who have lived or worked in a military airplane manufacturing facility named 'Factory 420.' This was a State Owned Enterprise (SOE) in Chengdu (Sichuan) that was once home to over 20000 workers (Anonymous, 2008), but in the film the factory is being dismantled in preparation for its redevelopment as a lavish high-rise office and apartment complex to be named '24 City.' The film is structured around interviews with people who were either factory workers or their family members. Once the Maoist era's leading figures, the worker class has now fallen in status and, like the factory in the film, has been made redundant due to the state's economic reforms and adoption of a market economy. These interviews are recorded in the workers' living, working and recreational environments, and many of the interviews are preceded or followed by information that enhances their historicity, such as intertitles that give further information about the interviewee (age, place of birth, and occupation), as well as their photographs and ID cards. During the interviews in this film, the interviewer is heard but never seen, and the camera seldom moves; rather, it focuses on the subjects' faces and upper bodies, observing as they reminisce about their lives at the factory and recording the memories and emotions that unfold during this process. In the course of the interview, the scene may fade to black and then resume, but the camera remains a constant unmoving, watching eye, observing as the memories are slowly recalled, a form that allows the narrative and its accompanying emotions to slowly build.

In an interview, Jia discusses his decision to create a film about the demise of Factory 420, stating: 'It was a typical case of urbanization in

today's China. I went there, saw the conditions, and it occurred to me that in five or ten years this story would be forgotten. So my aim is to use the medium of film to keep their story from disappearing...' (Anonymous, 2008). This desire to remember is found in the Chinese title of the film *24 Cheng Ji* (二十四成记), which translates as '24 City Memories,' therefore focussing not on the history, per se, but rather the memories about the factory by selecting the more subjective term of 'memory,' a word that has more emotional and narrative connotations, since 'history' is the 'official' record, while 'memory' is the vernacular. Taken together, these individual interviews form a collective memory as centered around the factory. In her interviews with rural peasant workers, Gail Hershatter argues that collective memory is 'formed in the recounting of a shared time, recalled through a set of shared conventions and further refined in interaction with others ... it is the memory of a life within a collective, a social formation that structured daily work, politics, and personal interactions' (2011, p. 30). Similarly, in her analysis of interviews with workers in Liaoning province, Ching Kwan Lee writes that collective memories 'are less about an objective chronology of the past than visions of the collectively experienced past' (2007, p. 142). These two concepts – Hershatter's 'shared time,' and Lee's 'visions of the collectively experienced past' – consider the phenomenology of memory, and how memory is not static and fossilized, but is rather organic, 'living,' and malleable, therefore emphasizing that memory is not only the remembrance of historical detail, per se, but of past experience.

Jia explains that he interviewed about fifty people, and, during editing, focused on retaining 'common experience' so that the film could provide audiences 'a vaster imaginary space, into which they can project their own experience and stories. What I filmed are not individual cases but collective memories' (Andrew, 2009, p. 82). The film's interviews form an intergenerational and collective memory of Factory 420's workers, which includes the first wave who founded the factory and moved with it to Chengdu (born ca. 1920s–1930s), their children who worked for the factory but were later made redundant (born ca. 1940s–1950s), and finally the youngest members of the factory collective that grew up in the factory's residences but have never worked in it and have instead pursued other employment (born ca. 1970s–1980s). What links these interviews is not only the factory, but also the ever-present theme of sacrifice that connects their personal narratives. The first and oldest generation is composed of those who migrated with the factory from its original location in Shenyang in Northeast China's Liaoning province in 1958, a move that, as explained in the film, was due to Mao's strategy of transferring military factories inland in order to distance them from the

Korean War conflict zone. The importance of the collective is particularly stressed in the interviews with this generation, who speak of their self-sacrifice for the factory collective, including how they forfeited their lives, filial responsibilities and, in one instance, even a child. With this sacrifice, however, came a sense of communal solidarity, and the factory collective became their 'family' that was more important than even their biological kin. They are proud of their contributions, and are intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually connected to the past and those that came before them. To illustrate this, during the interview with the machinery fitter He Xikun (b. 1948), he recounts that, when he attempted to throw a used tool away, his supervisor Master Wang (b. ca. 1930) had told him: 'You know that this small thing has come into our hands through those of many others. It can still be used.' He Xikun had then re-honed the tool and used it again. This story serves as a metaphor for the collective and communal solidarity that forms a lineage that connects the workers and their labor through the generations. Finally, He Xikun is also filmed visiting the now elderly Master Wang, who appears to be in the early stages of dementia. They reminisce about the past, and, during their visit, He Xikun strokes Master Wang's hand in fond appreciation for his teacher. There is an emotional bond, and He Xikun's visit is not just a meeting with a former supervisor but more of an act of filial affection.

This generation also produced and trained the next generation of workers, but this second generation has become redundant in the Reform era. Similar to the first generation, the sentiment of the second generation's self-sacrifice is expressed in the interview with the repairwoman Hou Lijun (b. 1953), who narrates how her family's move with the factory from Shenyang when she was a child prevented them from seeing their relatives back home for fourteen years, thus sacrificing their family responsibilities for the factory collective. When she and her coworkers were laid off in 1984, she stresses in her interview that they were not let go because they failed at their jobs, but because the factory was downsizing and required fewer workers. Even though they begged the directors of the factory to take them back (a request that was refused), there is no bitterness as to her plight and her suffering due to state-mandated economic reforms; instead, she avoids answering the interviewer's question as to whether the layoffs were a political decision, replying that the factory simply could not afford such a high number of employees and that 'nobody was in the wrong ... there was less work [and the factory was] earning less money. They couldn't support such a large work force. The company had to pay its own way ...'

This sacrifice is even echoed in the third group, the film's youngest generation who have never worked in the factory but have instead chosen

different careers. For instance, Su Na (b. 1982) is a daughter of factory workers, but has never had the desire to work in the factory. Instead, she has become an entrepreneur who has a small business as a personal shopper for the wealthy. During her interview, she narrates her horrific experience of looking for her mother at a telegraph-pole making factory, which she describes as having a wretched and dreadful environment due to the deafening noise of the machinery and the physically repetitive nature of the labor. She expresses her desire to work hard and save money so that she can purchase her parents a condo in their former workplace, stating: 'I know it will cost a lot, but I can do it; I'm the daughter of a worker.' This declaration of filial sacrifice and determination moves her to tears, as well as emphasizes the theme of sacrifice that resounds throughout the film.

Although the interviews can be viewed as presenting segments of 'real' memory of 'real' experience by 'real' people, there is an element that complicates this – that is, some of the interviews are not 'real' because they are performed by professional actors and use fictional narratives. In the press kit for the film, the interviewees are divided into two groups, one labeled 'starring' (for the actors) and the other labeled 'interviewees' (for the non-actors) (Xstream Pictures, 2008), and in Jia's book about the film, *A Collective Memory of Chinese Working Class* [sic], he refers to the interviews played by actors as 'fictional character interviews' while the nonfictional ones are described as 'worker interviews' (Jia, 2009, pp. 2–3).

The unscripted interviews are narrated by: the machinery fitter He Xikun (b. 1949), who later meets his supervisor Master Wang (Wang Zhiren, b. ca. 1930); Guan Fengjiu (b. 1935), who is Head of Security and Deputy Secretary of the Communist Party Committee; repair person Hou Lijun (b. 1953); and Zhao Gang (b. 1974), the son of factory workers who has instead become a television news anchor. Comparatively, the four scripted interviews are performed by the professional actors Lū Liping, Chen Jianbin, Joan Chen, and Zhao Tao, and each narrates their 'memories' connected to the factory during their individual interviews. Lū Liping plays the character Hao Dali (b. 1937), who tells the story of how her child went missing during the factory's move from Shenyang to Chengdu and was never found. Chen Jianbin enacts the role of Song Weidong (b. 1966), the son of two factory workers who 'recollects' growing up in the factory community. The third fictional interview is with the internationally-famous Joan Chen who plays 'Little Flower' (b. 1958), a worker who was prevented from moving back home to Shanghai by the household registration system, and who reminisces about her failed romances. The final interview is performed by Zhao Tao, who plays a character named Su Na (b. 1982) whose parents were workers in the

factory but who has decided not to follow the same line of work and has instead become a small business entrepreneur.

The presence of these fictional narratives in this 'documentary' film has been a focus of much debate. Shu-chin Wu argues that the fictional interviews offer an alternative version of history that emphasizes 'lived' time rather than simply its details, while Jiwei Xiao stresses that both real and false interviews produce the same effects. To examine this further, Wu writes that these interviews produce 'a version of history – a personal, alternative version – to supplement rather than to replace the official version' (2011, p. 9). Referencing Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*, she argues that fictional and real characters allow for the exploration of 'aspects of lived time that the historical narrative cannot reach' and that the fictional interviewees, '(t)hrough the interweaving of history and fiction,' bring forth '*human time*,' a time that 'is not less real than historical time' (Wu, 2011, p. 13). Wu explains: 'By emphasizing memory over history, Jia clearly expresses the emotions rather than the facts of history, the aspects of the past experienced in memory that professional historians do not and cannot deal with because of the lack of documents and proof' (2011, p. 19). Jiwei Xiao describes the blending of fiction and documentary in the film as 'disturbing' and 'unsettling' because 'the constructed, synthesized, and performed reminiscences are supposedly given the same value as "real" authentic memory' (Xiao, 2011). She writes, however, that the combination of fiction and nonfiction questions 'the constructedness of memory' in that memory is naturally distorted in retelling for the sake of coherence, and concludes 'the synthetic or composite memory may generate the same effects as "real" memory' (Xiao, 2011). Finally, Hsiu-Chuang Deppman describes the film as 'docufiction' that, although 'controversial and unsettling ... gives Jia the philosophical freedom to contrast, juxtapose, and integrate the real and the fictional in ways that defy and overwhelm conventional storytelling' (2014, p. 188).

In an interview, Jia declares that it was not intended to be a 'fake documentary' but rather an 'imaginary' one, and that he had never claimed it was real; rather, he explains that he used professional actors so that the film would be seen by more people (Li, 2009). Additionally, in another interview, he speaks about the connection between fiction and nonfiction, stating: 'A lot of people say that my narrative films are like documentaries and my documentaries are like narrative films, but I feel that both genres have many possibilities for seeking truth' (Rapfogel, 2008, p. 46). Such hybrid fiction/non-fiction documentaries are referred to as 'performative' documentaries by Bill Nichols (2001), who argues that they address the viewer 'emotionally and expressively' by combining the actual with the imagined (p. 132). This desire to communicate

emotionally is also expressed by Jia in an interview, in which he states: 'I have a very open perspective towards documentary and narrative films. Documentary and fiction are both ways of expressing our true feelings, so I don't think there's any contradiction' (Yumcha!, 2011). Stella Bruzzi argues that performance is used in performative documentaries in order to emphasize 'the impossibility of authentic documentary representation,' but that these performative elements can also be 'alienating' and 'distancing,' explaining, 'The fundamental issue is honesty. The performative element could be seen to undermine the conventional documentary pursuit of representing the real because the elements of performance, dramatization and acting for the camera are intrusive and alienating factors' (2006, pp. 185–187). But, she also writes that performative documentaries produce 'an alternative "honesty" that does not seek to mask their inherent instability but rather to acknowledge that performance ... will always be the heart of the non-fiction film' (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 187).

To examine the notion of 'alternative honesty' and its effect on the audience further, in *Les Structures de l'Expérience Filmique* (1969), Jean-Pierre Meunier analyzes the viewer experience of three film genres: Home movies (called *film-souvenir*), documentaries, and fiction films. In her analysis of this text, Vivian Sobchack (1999) writes that, when viewing a home movie, a viewer's consciousness is more intent on 'the general recovery of the memory of a whole person or event,' rather than 'the specific film image' (p. 244). Similarly, when viewing a documentary, 'our consciousness is more necessarily tied to and determined by the specificity of the images given on the screen and the increased attention that must be paid them' (Sobchack, 1999, p. 244). Finally, when experiencing fiction films, 'we have an even greater need than with the documentary to focus on and "intend" the screen in order to gain specific knowledge and enjoy a significant experience' (Sobchack, 1999, p. 244). Thus, viewers approach films differently if they are home movies, documentaries, or fiction films, expecting different elements from each – a memory of a personal event, a documentary image, or the enjoyment of an experience. She argues, however, that individual viewers shift between different modes of viewing, regardless of a film's genre; as she states, 'One viewer's fiction may be another's *film-souvenir*; one viewer's documentary, another's fiction ... (and thus) the spectator is an active agent in constituting what counts as memory, fiction, or document' (Sobchack, 1999, p. 253).

In these concepts, the viewers have agency in deciding how to respond to the fictionalized narratives and whether or not they accept the 'alternative honesty.' Xiao reports that some audience members of *24 City* felt that the performed interviews were 'disturbing' and 'unsettling'; it has also been reported, however, that some members of the audience



cried when the actor Zhao Tao delivered her final declaration of being a daughter of workers (Lee, 2009, p. 46). These reactions illustrate the contradictory effects of combining real and fictional interviews, as well as considering the positioning of viewers – whether they find the performed interviews lacking in emotional veracity or if they are moved by the scripted narratives. However, it is important to mention that these actors who deliver these scripted interviews are recognizable, and their real identities are not disguised, and therefore are not intended to defraud the audience. The film could have just as easily featured non-famous and obscure professional actors (and therefore non-recognizable) professional actors, not big screen stars who are identifiable to many people familiar with Chinese film and television (or, in the case of Joan Chen, also American). Lü Liping (b. 1960) is famous for her roles in *Old Well* (1986, Wu Tianming) and *The Blue Kite* (1993, Tian Zhuangzhuang); Chen Jianbin has starred in such films as *Chrysanthemum Tea* (2000, Jin Chen), *Confucius* (2011, Hu Mei), and the television series *Empresses in the Palace* (2012); Joan Chen, an international movie star, has featured in such films as *Tai-pan* (1986, Daryl Duke), *The Last Emperor* (1987, Bernardo Bertolucci), *Heaven & Earth* (1993, Oliver Stone), and *Lust, Caution* (2007, Ang Lee); and Zhao Tao (Jia's wife) has performed in most of Jia Zhangke's films, including *Platform* (2000), *Unknown Pleasures* (2002), *The World* (2004), *Still Life* (2006), and *I Wish I Knew* (2010). Although these actors may not be recognizable to some viewers, the deliberate and acknowledged use of this artificiality underscores that it is not the history or the veracity of the memory that the film emphasizes, but rather the emotions that are evoked in its recollection, thereby creating – and commemorating – the emotional history of this group through the effects of both the real and fictional memories and subjectivities. This emphasis of memory and emotion over history and 'fact' therefore stresses not the 'falsity' of these scripted interviews but rather their similarity to truth. For example, Gregory Currie argues that the reader is affected by fiction, and thus fiction produces real emotion. He explains that, through the 'transfer strategy,' 'we experience genuine emotions when we encounter fiction, but their relation to the story is causal rather than intentional; the story provokes thoughts about real people and situations, and these are the intentional objects of our emotions' (Currie 1990, p. 188). Comparatively, in their analysis of the effects of brain's mirror neurons, Hannah C. Wojciehowski and Vittorio Gallese (2011) argue, 'When we see someone acting or expressing a given emotional or somatosensory state, we can directly grasp its content without the need to reason explicitly about it.' They explain that such mirror mechanisms provide an 'embodied simulation' that creates the same emotions and sensations

in the viewer not only through observation but also through imagination. As they surmise:

We propose that embodied simulation can be relevant to our experience of narrative for two reasons: First, because of the Feeling of Body triggered by narrated characters and situations with whom we identify by means of the mirroring mechanisms they evoke. In such a way, embodied simulation generates the peculiar *seeing-as* that plays a peculiar role in our aesthetic experience. Second, because of the bodily memories and imaginative associations the narrated material can awake in our reader's minds, without the need to reflect upon them explicitly (Wojciehowski and Gallese, 2011).

They go on to argue that 'artistic fiction is often more powerful than real life in evoking our emotional engagement and empathetic involvement,' hypothesizing that it is because it allows us to 'temporarily suspend our grip on the world of our daily occupations' (Wojciehowski and Gallese, 2011). Thus, such concepts allow us to consider how the false interviews are 'real' phenomenologically in that, although not veridical, they offer a 'history' based on possible human experience, as well as have emotional affects not only through observing these interviewees and their emotional states, but also through the viewer's embodied imagination.

### 记得 Remembering

Not only do the memories have effects, they are also affective as they record the narrative of the memories themselves, and through recording the act of remembering and its recitation, they resurrect the emotions from the past in the present. Instead of cinematically 'reconstructing' memory via re-enactments, these interviews use the remembered past, thus presenting a past that is being remembered, performed and retold in the present – the 'present' of the film's recording as well as the 'present' of its viewing, re-created through this narration. There are no flashbacks in the film or reconstructions; rather, all memories (fictive and real) are recollected during their interviews and are both therefore 'performed' in their retelling. As Peggy Phelan (2002) writes, 'In performance, the body is metonymic of self, of character, of voice, of "presence"' (p. 150). This presence is not only conveyed through the interviewees speaking onscreen, but through their voice and speech – the act of speaking and the act of remembering.

The viewer experiences these emotional interviews as they unfold, a process that involves both the speaker and the listener. For instance, Merleau-Ponty (1945, 2005) writes that, when listening to an orator, it is possible that engaged listeners 'have no thought marginal to the text itself, for the words fully occupy our mind and exactly fulfill our expectations,

and we feel the necessity of the speech. Although we are unable to predict its course, we are possessed by it. The end of the speech or text will be the lifting of a spell' (p. 209). This concept allows us to consider that, similar to how these interviews capture the memories and the act of remembering, as well as emotions and the act of emoting, so too do they capture speech and the act of speaking. Mladen Dolar (2006) writes, 'the voice has an intimate connection with meaning, it is a sound which appears to be endowed in itself with the will to "say something," with an inner intentionality' (p. 14). The voice is affective, not only in what it says but through its very act, and thus it is not only a medium for the memories, but also has its own effects.

During my repeated viewings of the film, I became engrossed in the interviews – namely, the experience of remembering and not only what the characters said but how they narrated their memories – the breathing, the stammering, the crying, and the blinking back of tears. It is affective, therefore, not only because of the content of what is narrated, but also due to the interviewees' acts of remembering, speaking, and emoting. For instance, in several interviews the subjects repeat the phrase 'I remember,' often as they search their memories as well as to preface what they are about to recall. As they narrate their memories, some stutter and pause to think, dredging through their thoughts, a process that emphasizes the act of remembering and the reification of memory in the filmic present. Even the fictional interviews do not appear to be composed and prepared, but instead appear as if slowly being recollected in the film, a process that enhances their poignancy. Merleau-Ponty (1945, 2005) argues that speech is the achievement of thought, stating 'speech, in the speaker does not translate ready-made thought, but accomplishes it' (p. 207). This allows us to consider how the memories, both real and scripted, become 'real' in their narration – the act of giving them voice 'accomplishes' the memories, making them real, regardless of their source.

Earlier, I referenced Lee's description of memory as being 'less about an objective chronology of the past than visions of the collectively experienced past' (Lee, 2007, p. 142). If 'synthetic' or fictional memory has the same effects as 'real' memory and if we combine it with the phenomenological nature of memory – that is, the recollection of lived, emotional experience – we can consider how both interviews explore how the past was – or could have been – felt, through the narration of these memories. This emphasis on feeling connects to Abbott's concept of 'lyrical sociology,' which aims not to 'show reality' but to 'feel reality' (Abbott, 2007, p. 76). He compares it to narrative sociology, which seeks to explain social life: 'A narrative writer seeks to tell us what happened and perhaps to explain it. A lyrical writer aims to tell us of his or

her intense reaction to some portion of the social process seen in a moment ... It means that the first will try to show reality by abstract mimesis while the second will try to make us feel reality through concrete emotions' (Abbott, 2007, p. 76). To stress this point further, it is to feel reality through emotion, which is how both the real and performed interviews operate, since both evoke similar emotions, regardless whether the source is real or fictional. With this in mind, we can see how both fictional and documentary interviews also explore the phenomenological and emotional aspects of actual and possible lived experience, both of which convey emotion. Both kinds of interviews can have the same emotional effects.

In this way, we can consider how *24 City's* interviews allow the viewer to feel reality through emotion via the prosthesis of film. Byron Reeves and Clifford Naas (1998) argue that 'media experiences are *emotional* experiences' (p. 136), since their psychological tests indicated that people responded the same way to both mediated and real stimuli as if 'the people, objects, and places were actually present' (p. 116). Furthermore, they write:

Even though the images viewers saw in the study were obviously from popular media, there was no switch in people's brains that caused them to view the segments differently than real life. Viewers did not discount the pictures as merely symbolic, unworthy of serious emotional response, nor did they lump all the pictures into a single 'media' cluster. The media segments were real enough to warrant a complete range of emotional responses. (Reeves and Naas, 1998, p. 135)

Thus, these filmic memories – real and fictional – offer the viewer what Landsberg describes as 'prosthetic memory,' a type of memory that has not been personally experienced but has been 'experienced' through such media technologies as film and television, and can thus 'be acquired by anyone' (Landsberg, 2004, p. 2). She argues that by watching such 'memories' on the screen, 'the person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live' (Landsberg, 2004, p. 2). Thus, although not personally experienced, these prosthetic memories are still 'felt' during the film viewing experience because of empathy. She states, 'Unlike sympathy, empathy does not depend on "natural" affinity, on some kind of essential underlying connection between the two subjects ... empathy is an essential part of taking on prosthetic memories, of finding ways to inhabit other people's memories as other people's memories' (Landsberg, 2004, p. 24). Combining Landsberg's concept of prosthetic memory with Wu's lived time and Xiao's effects,

we can therefore see that the interviews in *24 City* provide this kind of empathic prosthetic memory, in that they focus on the emotion of the memories (both real and fake). These are not just connected to the event, per se, but rather to the concept of the event, and this generates real emotion, regardless if its genesis is real or fictional.

The focus on the past as a remembered experience that is in the process of being recollected, seemingly as the film is viewed, heightens the viewers' emotional attachment during the recitation of the memories and the resurrection of their accompanying emotions. Jia remarks on the filmmaking progress, 'I was exhausted after every interview, because I had to enter the life of the person and relive stories through their words' (Lee, 2010). Similar to Abbott's concept of lyrical sociology, the interviews offer an 'engaged emotional stance.' In addition to the emotions expressed during the interviews, because the interviewees are filmed in the act of remembering, emotions attached to their memories are concretized in the present. The word 'emotion' stems from the Latin word *emovere*, to 'move outward'; in the same way that the memories are remembered and therefore both re-felt and re-experienced in the present as well as transmitted to the viewer in their remembering, so too are these past emotions 'moving outward.' For instance, Hou Lijun's memory of crying when finally seeing her grandmother after many years apart, causes her to cry during her interview due to the memory of this previous strong emotion. Thus, her recollection during the film brings her emotions of the past into the present and resurrects the same effects in her retelling of it, decades after it had happened, and recreates the emotion anew in its remembrance. By recording this act, the film captures a segment of time that allows the full emotion to unfold, from the tears' initial suppression to their eventual fall. Furthermore, to reference Wojciehowki and Gallese's previous argument, this recorded emotional response has the potential to affect the viewer as well.

#### 念- To Think Of

Thus, through the recollection of lived and fictive memory, the film's memories, the performance of remembering, and the emotions evoked, commemorate the factory and its workers. Our final category, *nian* (念 meaning to think of, miss, and read aloud) is made up of two parts: *jin* (今, meaning present and current), and *xin* (心, meaning heart and mind) – a mindful and emotional presence. This word also has religious connections. It is found in the 'Contemplation of the Buddha Tradition' (念佛, *nian fo*), a group religious practice that combines simultaneous recitation with contemplation, thus merging 'the dual meanings of vocal invocation and mental meditation at the same time' (Yü, 2001, p. 164).

The film's interviews offer a similar contemplative experience, in that they commemorate and honor the past through memory, narration, and a mindful presence, therefore combining the affects of recitation and contemplation with Jia's desire to 'to keep their story from disappearing'.

But these interviews are also doing something else; whilst simultaneously commemorating the factory and the workers and invoking the memories and emotions in the present, they also elegize them. Peggy Phelan (2002) explains that the Christian ritual of the Mass commemorates the Last Supper and that the 'promise evoked by this performance then is to learn to value what is lost, to learn not the meaning but the value of what cannot be reproduced or seen (again)' (p. 152). To return to Hou Lijun's interview, she starts to cry as she recalls crying in the past; as tears are both a sign and an index of mourning, these tears shed in the present both mourn and commemorate the factory and its workers and elegize them. The film, therefore, can be seen as combining recitation and contemplation to commemorate the past, but it does not seek to recreate it – this loss is a permanent state and can neither be reversed nor the object of loss resurrected. During the course of the film, the factory is reduced to ruin. Similar to this image of the factory in ruins, the past (and by extension, the worker class) cannot be reconstructed, and can only be commemorated and mourned as it slowly passes into history.

This performance and recitation of memory to invoke (and therefore resurrect) past emotion in the present and produce the same emotion in others is not a new phenomenon, particularly in China. During the Maoist period, 'Remember the Bitterness' campaigns were organized by Communist work teams to ensure that the citizenry did not forget the poverty of the past. Ann Anagnost (1994) explains that such campaigns stemmed from a tradition of 'the public venting of rage' in which the gathering crowd acted 'as a "court of public opinion"' that could also act as mediators (p. 264). Anagnost argues that a main component of these campaigns was not only the remembering but the vocalizing of these memories. Maoist 'phonocentrism' replaced the previous Confucian 'graphocentrism,' privileged 'the location of truth in the spoken word as opposed to writing,' and it was believed that such a voice 'engaged in a metaphysics of presence' (p. 265). The purpose of the campaigns was not only to recount past historical injustices, but to also evoke the emotions associated with them, and therefore reaffirm their self-righteousness. The campaigns were instigated to have specific effects, and were held to continue the revolutionary sentiment by stoking embers of anger, resentment and righteous indignation. Such emotions, however, are conspicuously absent in *24 City*; although several of the interviewees in the film recall traumatizing events, such as the loss of a child and the

abandonment of family members for the collective, they are neither angry nor filled with resentment. Rather, they seem proud of their sacrifice and, though tearful about their loss, are surprisingly not angry at what possibly could have been avoidable personal sacrifices.

*24 City's* memories and the emotions evoked are mournful and commemorative, not angry and indignant. Unlike the Remember the Bitterness campaigns or the workers in Lee's study who 'express intense moral indignation and outrage against injustice most vividly in recalling and contrasting the past with the present' (2007, p. 142), *24 City's* interviewees are not angry – the emotions evoked are sorrowful but not resentful, contemplative not passionate, and mourn and commemorate the Maoist past. They do not demand justice or retribution for their suffering; rather, they accept the changes and mourn the past, with an elegiac quality that is far removed from 'moral indignation and outrage,' as well as the political demands of the campaigns. Although it is obvious from their representation in the film that many members of this class have been maltreated in the new economy, as evidenced through their stories of unemployment and financial hardship, the film portrays them as a harmless group that is in no danger of rising up, and affects a feeling of sorrow rather than vengeance. Blame for their mass unemployment and redundancy in the new economy is deflected away from the state, the organ that introduced the reforms and that theoretically controls the Chinese economy.

In this way, like the transfer of land ceremony at the beginning of the film that marks the closure of the factory, these memories and the emotions they evoke mark the 'closing' of the worker class, eliciting emotions that commemorate and mourn this class while preparing for a future without them. The workers begin the commemoration ceremony by singing the Chinese Communist hymn 'Ode to the Motherland' (歌唱祖国). The song's refrain, which repeats eight times, is 'We sing of our dear Motherland, which from now on will move towards prosperity,' and the last stanza is: 'The Eastern Sun is Rising, the People's Republic is growing, our leader Mao Zedong is showing us the way ahead. Our life becomes better every day, our future shines out ten thousand miles ahead' (Rainbow, 2008). But, in the film, the workers have not moved towards prosperity. The only ones that have benefited have been those who have chosen other careers. Thus, their prosperity has not been provided by Mao but rather through capitalist economic reforms.

Before the second to last interview begins, the film records a television news broadcast performed by the interviewee, Zhao Gang, in which he reports on the redevelopment of the factory into a residential and entertainment complex. Next, Zhao is seen shopping for an apartment in

the complex's showroom, while a young female assistant shows him the plastic architectural model of the future development's plan. The assistant informs him that the final development will retain some 'distinctive' parts of the old factory, like the Old Mill, monuments to what the factory once was. Here, the 'distinctive' parts of the factory have been selected to represent the factory and serve as decorative symbols of the past, but have been stripped of their former function. In his interview that follows, he explains that he had initially trained to be a factory worker, but during his apprenticeship he became so disillusioned with the career due its monotony and repetition that he left his workplace in such a hurry that he did not stop to pick up his luggage. Thus, the worker class, like the factory, is in the past and the workers' children have chosen other careers.

But, the future may not be as rosy as it pictured. After his interview, the film records a security guard patrolling the abandoned and crumbling factory building in ruins. As he moves through the dilapidated space, we hear the melancholy song 'The World Outside' (外面的世界, 1987) by the Taiwanese singer/songwriter Chyi Chin. Chin sings the lyrics 'A long, long time ago, I had you and you had me; a long, long time ago, you left me to soar the distant skies. The outside world is wonderful, the outside world is...'. A rock thrown through a window interrupts the song, and it abruptly stops; likewise, the guard ceases his motion and pauses briefly to look at the rock, but then continues on his way. The unfinished lyric hangs in the air, however; people familiar with the song would know that the missing final words were 'utterly helpless,' expressing a mixture of confusion, loss, and precariousness that emphasizes the felt experience of this group, but, even if these lyrics were not understood, this emotion can also be felt in the sadness of the singer's voice. Although Zhao is a very successful TV news reporter filmed shopping for a luxury condo, the song's missing lyrics hang in the air, albeit unspoken, thus emphasizing this loss.

#### 纪念 – Commemoration, to Commemorate

I have analyzed how the film commemorates Factory 420 and its workers through examining the specific elements of memory, the act of remembering, the voice, and emotion. I have argued that the 'memories in performance' in *24 City* commemorate the factory and its workers by engaging affectively with the empathetic viewer through the emotion evoked during the course of the film, and the role that emotion has in constructing a 'felt' commemorative history of a group and a place that are rapidly fading into the past. The word *jinian* (纪念) means both 'to commemorate' and 'commemoration,' and thus is both a noun and a verb. Similarly, film can have the ability to be both a commemoration as well as



an act of commemoration, in that it has the potential to offer the viewer an affective experience and involve them in the process of commemoration.

The film is part of a larger post-millennium turn towards commemoration in China. Cui Shuqin writes of a 'memory wave' that occurred in the mid-2000s that was practiced by Chinese filmmakers, including Jia Zhangke, and describes such films as 'dealing with the theme of a past lost in memory and neglected in representation' (Cui, 2006, p. 99). I would like to conclude by suggesting that *24 City* does not only memorialize the past, which has been 'lost in memory and neglected in representation,' but also commemorates it – 'brings it to remembrance' by offering an affective experience of commemoration. Thus, it has not only recorded memories before they have disappeared, but also their affects, therefore commemorating an emotional history through memory and affect. In this way, these 'memories in performance' are both sight and site of commemoration – a commemorative object as well as a commemorative experience.

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